

CHAPTER 5

CORRESPONDENCE/MESSAGE FILES AND DISPOSAL

As a Yeoman (YN), you must be able to file correspondence correctly and retrieve it quickly. The amount of time it takes you to locate a certain piece of correspondence will depend on how well you know the Navy filing system.

This chapter introduces you to the Navy way of filing, equipment commonly used by the YN, and various procedures that will help you perform your duties efficiently. The chapter then covers the numerical subject identification coding system. Finally, the records disposal system is discussed.

CENTRALIZED AND DECENTRALIZED FILES

Your command has two options in the manner it keeps incoming and outgoing correspondence readily available: centralized or decentralized files. Centralized filing, where all official copies of outgoing correspondence and the originals of incoming correspondence are maintained in the same office, is used by ships, small shore commands, or commands with a minimal amount of correspondence. A decentralized system, where the originals and official copies are maintained at the departmental level, is appropriate when there is considerable correspondence routed directly to a department or division having responsibility over a specific subject. Larger shore commands, Navy Department offices or bureaus, or activities where offices are widely separated use the decentralized system.

In either system, control and responsibility are assigned to one or two YNs. In a central file, all operations and control are under one person's immediate supervision. In a decentralized system, a supervisor makes sure that uniform filing practices are followed in each file location. Whichever system is used, files should not be duplicated. There should be only **one** official file.

FILE EQUIPMENT

Whether ashore or aboard ship, the equipment you use is standardized. The following paragraphs give you general knowledge of the types of filing equipment used throughout the Navy.

CABINETS

The types and sizes of file cabinets vary to accommodate the size of the material filed. Since materials should be filed without folding, the size of the cabinet is determined by the size of the individual sheets, cards, or other records to be filed.

Four- or five-drawer, steel, letter-size cabinets are the Navy standard for active correspondence and documents. The Navy standard correspondence size is 8 1/2 by 11 inches, and file cabinets available through the supply system are designed to accommodate this size. Specialized file cabinets are available for larger sized documents, such as drawings, charts, or legal-sized documents.

Each file drawer is equipped with an adjustable backstop, called a compressor. By adjusting the position of the compressor, your files are kept in an upright and orderly position when a file drawer is only partially filled.

CARD FILES

In addition to regular filing cabinets, files of appropriate size are used for filing various size cards. The standard sizes used are 3 by 5 inches and 5 by 8 inches. Equipment for filing cards ranges from single desk-top boxes to multidrawer and sectioned floor cabinets.

VISIBLE FILES

Visible files of various sizes and types are common in certain offices. This type of file is arranged so that the data contained can be seen and read with minimum handling. Examples of some of these files are shown in figure 5-1.

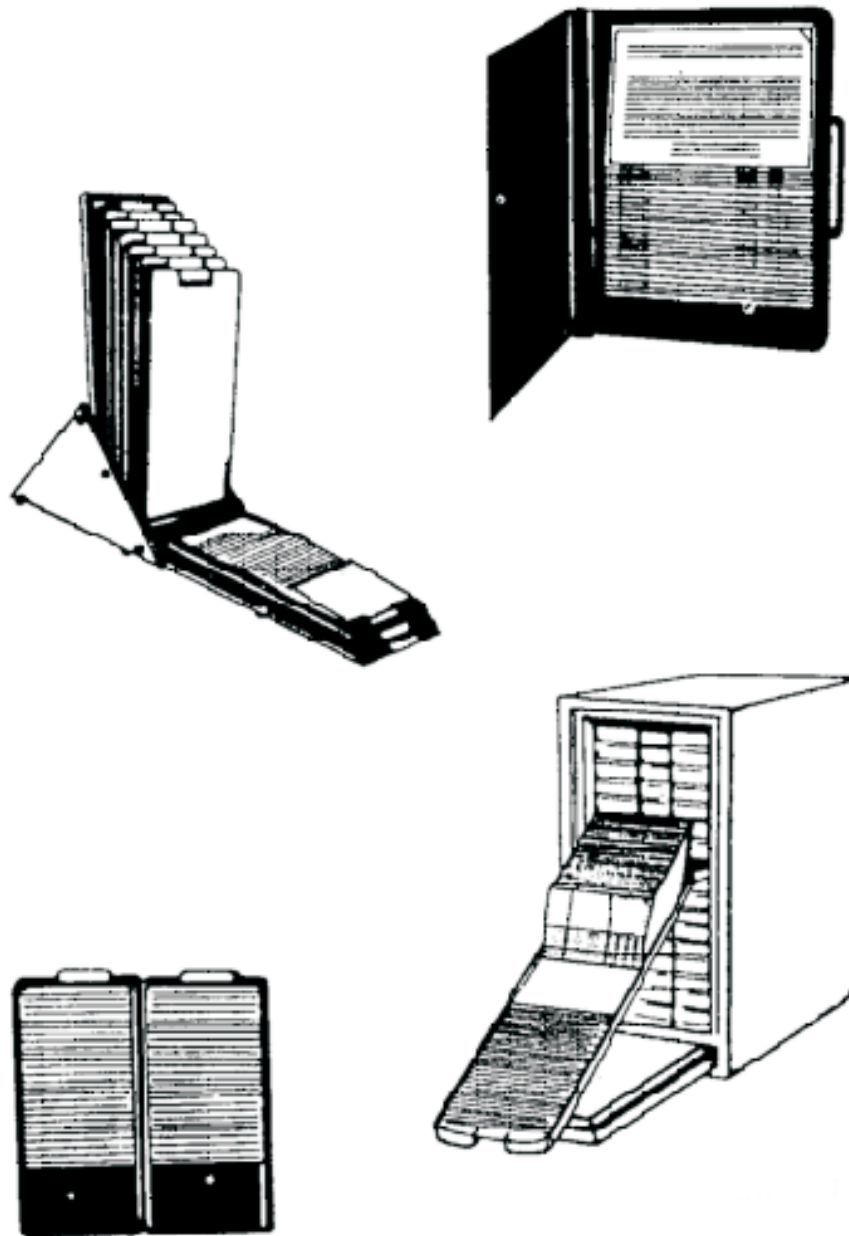


Figure 5-1.—Examples of visible files.

FILE FOLDERS

Standard file folders are used to keep your correspondence orderly. They are available in two sizes: letter, 9 by 11 3/4 inches; and legal, 9 by 14 3/4 inches. Each folder has an area for labeling that extends above any filed material. The area may run the entire length of the folder, known as straight cut, or may be cut in one of three positions; left, center, or right, known as one-third cut. Straight-cut folders are used, generally, when the files are thick enough to make sure the labels of adjacent folders are easily seen. One-third cut folders space the labels across the drawer so that the folder in front of it will not hide a label. Figure 5-2 shows files that are one-third cut tabs.

SECURITY FILES

The *Department of the Navy (DON) Information and Security Program (ISP) Regulation*, SECNAVINST 5510.36 series, defines the security requirements for file cabinets that contain classified material. These requirements will be discussed in chapter 8 of this NRTC.

STANDARD SUBJECT IDENTIFICATION CODES

The *Department of the Navy Standard Subject Identification Codes (SSIC)*, SECNAVINST 5210.11

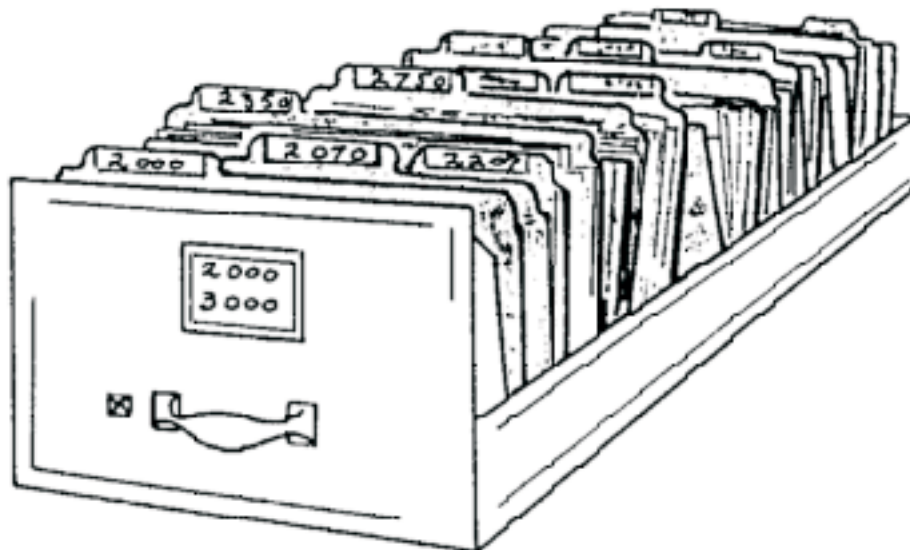


Figure 5-2.—File drawer showing folders and tab positions.

series, contains the numerical codes that provide the basic classification structure for identifying and filing records. These codes cover most subjects found in general correspondence and other files. Since these numbers are used for numbering other naval documents (such as reports, forms, and directives) by subject category, they also provide the basis for a single Navywide subject numbering system.

NUMERICAL SUBJECT GROUPS

There are 14 major numerical subject groups, called series, using groups of thousands. They are as follows:

- 1000 Military Personnel
- 2000 Telecommunications
- 3000 Operations and Readiness
- 4000 Logistics
- 5000 General Administration and Management
- 6000 Medicine and Dentistry
- 7000 Financial Management
- 8000 Ordnance Material
- 9000 Ships Design and Material
- 10000 General Material
- 11000 Facilities and Activities Ashore
- 12000 Civilian Personnel
- 13000 Aeronautical and Astronautical Material
- 16000 Coast Guard Mission

Within the major groups are subdivisions using the second, third, and sometimes fourth digit. For example:

- 5000 General Administration and Management
- 5200 Management Programs and Techniques
- 5210 Office Methods and Paper Work Management
- 5211 Files and Records Systems

or,

- 5300 Manpower/Personnel

or,

- 5400 Organization, Functions, Status, and so on.

ASSIGNING THE RIGHT SSIC

Assigning the right SSIC is the most important filing operation because it determines where the document will be placed in the files. A properly assigned SSIC can be readily identified and found when needed. Read the document carefully, analyze it, and then select the SSIC that most closely matches the subject. Consider the following:

- The most important, definite, or concrete subject mentioned
- The purpose or general significance of the document

- The manner in which similar documents are asked for
- The SSIC under which previous documents of a similar nature are filed

Be specific when you assign the SSIC. Some of the smaller subject groups are not subdivided beyond the first breakdown, while larger groups may be broken down to a second or third level, as in the example.

CROSS-REFERENCING MATERIAL

Most official correspondence, reports, or other material only need to be filed under one SSIC. There are times, however, when more than one code will apply to the contents of the correspondence. In these cases, a system of cross-referencing is desirable to permit you to locate the document quickly. Instances in which the cross-referencing may be needed would include the following:

- When a document has more than one subject
- When the subject may be interpreted more than one way
- When two or more other subject codes are used within the document
- When any enclosures are separated from the basic correspondence

By inserting a cross-reference sheet in each of the files where the document could be kept, you will know by glancing at the entry alongside the filed heading where the original document is located.

For cross-referencing, use a plain sheet of paper and include the following information:

1. Date of document
2. Index number (SSIC/serial number), if available
3. Addressee
4. Originator
5. Summary of document
6. Cross-file location (SSIC)
7. Initials of person filing/indexing
8. Any applicable remarks

Alternatively, you can sanitize the original correspondence by covering the body of the letter (leaving only the upper portion of the document visible) for copying. The sanitized copy can then be used as the cross-reference sheet. If the cross-referenced

document is supportive of more than one other document, include information (by typing or placing a label directly) on the cross-reference sheet identifying the secondary document and its location. Figure 5-3 shows an example of a document sanitized for cross-referencing.

Include a copy of the cross-reference sheet with the original document to show that the document has been cross-referenced and to what file(s).

OFFICIAL FILING METHODS

Documents are inserted loosely into the file folder in SSIC order. The loose filing saves time and effort when new material is inserted or documents are returned to the file after they have been removed.

Material that cannot be folded to fit neatly into a file folder should be filed separately in a suitably sized container. The location of the removed material must then be noted on the basic document or on a cross-reference sheet maintained in the regular file.

REMOVING FILE MATERIAL

Any material removed from a file must be accounted for, and the identity of the person holding it must be recorded. This comes in very handy when the commanding officer asks for a specific piece of correspondence and wants it **now**.

The Chargeout Record, Optional Form 23, shown in figure 5-4, is available for this purpose. The identification of the material removed, the name and location of the person borrowing it, and the date it is borrowed are entered on the form. The form then replaces the document in the file folder.

You should make periodic checks of the chargeout records you have in your files to make sure no documents have been out for an unreasonable period of time. This check may help avoid loss or misplacement if the borrower should forget to return the document after it is no longer needed.

ESTABLISHMENT OF FILES

Each year, every command closes out the files of the previous year: so a new set should be set up at that time. There is nothing difficult about this task, but some thought should be given to the process.

The importance of having files is already well established. The accuracy of the filing system and the ease in retrieving information are just as important.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
NAVAL AIR STATION
PENSACOLA, FL 32508

5216
Ser 11/352
3 Jun 00

From: Commanding Officer, Naval Air Station, Pensacola
To: Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet
Via: (1) Commander, Sea Based ASW Wings, Atlantic
(2) Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet

Subj: HOW TO PREPARE ENDORSEMENTS

Encl: (1) Orientation Schedule for Newcomers

CROSS-REFERENCED DOCUMENT:
SEE 7500
/OR/ SEE 7500, Ser 09/004 of 15 May 00*

** If cross-referenced document is supportive of more than one other document, include identifying data of the other documents it references.*

Figure 5-3.—Sanitized cross-referenced document.

The administration of a command is an ongoing process that requires easy access to previous correspondence either received or sent out. Without efficiently managed files, time is lost and the command's overall effectiveness can be affected.

When starting up a new year's files, always take a look at last year's files. Where was the most information contained? Which SSIC files were really bulky, and which contained only a few pieces of paper? Use this review to prepare your new folders. Some SSIC groups could be broken down further to make them quicker to find. Some groups could be combined in the same folder to save space. If you are setting up the files for a brand new command, keep in mind the basic mission of your command. If your command has a basically logistic mission, those subject groups will probably be used the most. Likewise, it could be ordnance-related, operations-related, or personnel-related, so those groups will see more use.

MESSAGE FILES

Messages are filed numerically in the order of the date time group (DTG). The DTG is expressed as six digits with a zone suffix plus an abbreviated month and a two-digit year. The first pair of digits denotes the date of the month, the second pair denotes the hours, and the third pair the minutes, followed by a capitalized letter that indicates the zone. For standardization, all naval communications use Greenwich (Z) time. The month and year are abbreviated by using the first three letters of the month and the last two digits of the year. For example:

172140Z MAY 01

Separate message files are maintained for incoming and outgoing messages, with the most recent message on top. Separate files are also maintained for general messages such as ALNAV (All Navy) and NAVOPS (Navy Operations). They are normally filed

The term **appropriate for preservation** gives you a good rule of thumb as to whether or not an item needs to be destroyed.

WHAT GOVERNS DISPOSAL

The United States Criminal Code provides penalties for unlawful removal or destruction of federal records. The Records Disposal Act of 1943 established the means to obtain legal authority for destruction of unneeded government records. Authority for general procedures pertaining to disposal of federal government records rests with the National Archives, a part of the General Services Administration.

Specifically pertaining to Navy members is *Navy Regulations*, 1990, Article 1127, which provides that no person without proper authority may withdraw official records or destroy them.

AUTHORITY FOR DISPOSAL

The *Records Disposition Manual* provides the authority for disposal of naval records, including naval correspondence, accumulated by naval activities ashore and afloat.

DISPOSAL RESPONSIBILITY

The individual responsible for custody of official records at your activity has the additional responsibility of making sure that official files are disposed of according to the appropriate disposal standard. Your job is to assist the responsible person in making sure that your records are complete and that the proper standards from the *Records Disposition Manual* are applied.

METHODS OF DISPOSAL

The two official methods of disposal are local **destruction** or **transfer** to the nearest FRC. The types of records transferred to the center are those designated in the *Records Disposition Manual* for which you can find no disposal authority (after they have served the needs of your activity), and any inactive record of any age or type, when it is determined that savings can be realized by the transfer and the records are no longer required for local operating purposes.

Destruction

Most unclassified records are destroyed locally at the end of their retention periods. Classified material must be destroyed by burning or other authorized method. If you are at sea, your unclassified and classified records should be destroyed by burning. At ashore activities, unclassified records may be scrapped or sold as wastepaper, provided the records are either treated to destroy the word content, or a clause is inserted in the contract prohibiting the resale or use of the records or documents.

Transfer

Few records are actually transferred for preservation. Those records that have a retention value are transferred to the nearest FRC. An up-to-date listing of FRCs is contained in the *Records Disposition Manual*.

Appendix C of the *Records Disposition Manual* outlines the procedures for transferring records. A Records Transmittal and Receipt, SF-135, shown in figure 5-5, is used to forward retention material to an FRC. The FRC returns a copy to you acknowledging receipt.

Preservation

Indefinite or permanent retention of official records is known as preservation. This does not include locally retained records, but does include all official records retained at an authorized FRC.

REVIEWING

Using the *Records Disposition Manual* as your guide, you will be able to alert the person having responsibility for the files as to the proper procedure for disposing of them. One way to keep ahead of this process is to have a label placed on the file that lists the date the file was originated, how long you need to retain it locally, and what disposition action is required. This helps to ensure that records are disposed of at the correct time and in the proper manner.

Transfers

Records designated in the disposal instructions for transfer to an FRC should be forwarded as scheduled, or earlier. Records for which you cannot find a disposal authority are transferred when they are of no further value to your activity. A word of caution: Even though

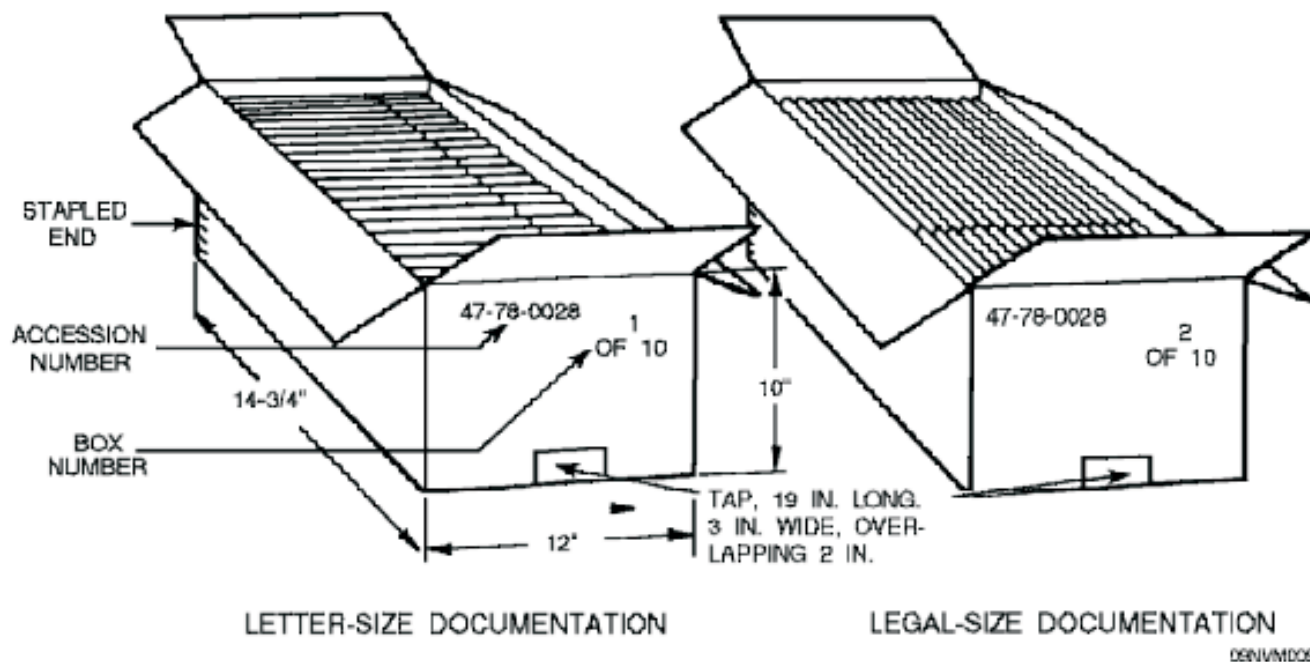


Figure 5-6.—Packing records for shipment.

REFERENCE REQUEST - FEDERAL RECORDS CENTERS		NOTE: Use a separate form for each request.	
SECTION I - TO BE COMPLETED BY REQUESTING AGENCY			
ACCESSION NO.	AGENCY BOX NUMBER	RECORDS CENTER LOCATION NUMBER	
	OF		
DESCRIPTION OF RECORD(S) OR INFORMATION REQUESTED			
<input type="checkbox"/> BOX			
<input type="checkbox"/> FOLDER (include file number and title)			
REMARKS			
NATURE OF SERVICE			
<input type="checkbox"/> FURNISHED COPY OF RECORD(S) ONLY	<input type="checkbox"/> PERMANENT WITHDRAWAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY LOAN OF RECORD(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> REVIEW
		<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (Specify)	
SECTION II--FOR USE BY RECORDS CENTER			
<input type="checkbox"/> RECORDS NOT IN CENTER CUSTODY	<input type="checkbox"/> RECORDS DESTROYED	REMARKS	
<input type="checkbox"/> WRONG ACCESSION NUMBER - PLEASE RECHECK			
<input type="checkbox"/> WRONG BOX NUMBER - PLEASE RECHECK			
<input type="checkbox"/> WRONG CENTER LOCATION - PLEASE RECHECK			
<input type="checkbox"/> ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED TO IDENTIFY RECORDS REQUESTED			
<input type="checkbox"/> MISSING (Neither record(s), information nor charge card found in container(s) specified)			
<input type="checkbox"/> RECORDS PREVIOUSLY CHARGED OUT TO (Name, agency and date):			
	DATE	SERVICE	TIME REQUIRED
			SEARCHER'S INITIALS
SECTION III--FOR USE BY RECORDS CENTER			
NAME OF REQUESTER	TELEPHONE NO. <input type="checkbox"/> FTS	DATE	
		RECEIPT OF RECORDS	
NAME AND ADDRESS OF AGENCY (Include street address, building, room no., and ZIP Code)		Requester please sign, date and return this form, for file item(s) listed above, ONLY if the block to right has been checked by the Records Center.	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	
		SIGNATURE	DATE

Figure 5-7.—Reference Request—Federal Records Center, Optional Form 11.

SUMMARY

Each office you work in will have its own unique aspects. The leadership and management style of your supervisor, the area of responsibility of the department or division, and the type of equipment available will have an

effect on filing. But, throughout the Navy, the basic functions of filing, classifying, coding, and cross-referencing remain constant. **Learn** the SSIC codes and **understand** the Navy filing system. You will then be able to fit into any office and perform effectively as a YN.